



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

BADGERS IN THE GREAT ADVENTURE

ALBANY BOY WINS CROIX DE GUERRE¹

I have tried to get the opportunity to write you a letter—at least something that might be called a letter—but the Germans have kept us a bit too busy. Believe I promised you all a long letter when I got “en repos” telling you about our work in the first attack. The trouble was before we had any “repose” we were shoved into another attack—much worse than the other. However, at present we are in a quiet sector so I shall have time to tell you most of the things that happened to us.

Our first taste of real war was at Nazon—you have seen the name on the map and in the reports many times I know. We went from there to Vertus where we were “en repos.” It was a pretty trip as far as Compeigne; from there it presented all the sadness, sorrow, and confusion and horrors of this great war. The roads there are wide and allow four wagons or cars to pass abreast. As a rule there was a double stream on the road continuously. Coming from the front were long lines of trucks (which had carried soldiers to the front) laden down with refugees and their possessions; following these were wagons loaded with household articles and everywhere there were refugees, old women, little children, all carrying all they owned in the world. Their homes had probably been shot down by this time or would soon be. They were going—they did not know where—but all they wanted was to go. There was also a steady stream of soldiers coming out of the lines. They were tired—so tired some could not go on but rested in peculiar positions along the road. Then came more wagons, ambulances loaded inside and out with wounded—some having no clothing and being wrapped in blankets—more trucks, more refugees, and more soldiers. Over all floated a cloud of dust—everyone was covered with dust—one breathed dust and ate dust and above all hated dust. Going in toward the front were trucks of soldiers, ambulances, big guns, small guns, and ammunition wagons—more men, more men. Every-

¹ Letter of John B. Litel to his father, June 27, 1918, printed in *Janesville Gazette* of August 10.

one was hurrying in rout. There was little talk, but every face had a set expression. For us new to the game it was a strange and impressive sight, one never to be forgotten.

About five in the evening we reached our destination—a little village deserted by all save a few soldiers, the buildings most shot to pieces. We washed up, ate, and turned in for a little much needed sleep. The night before we had slept but two hours and had been constantly on the go. We were soon to learn that we were very fortunate in securing two hours of sleep. About eleven that night we were called and told that we must leave in five minutes—we also left all our blankets, cots, etc., carrying our barrack bags and a few toilet articles. We moved ten kilometers and parked our cars near the road. It was quite cold but we managed to get a few hours' sleep. At six o'clock six of us went on duty. As we went toward the front there was really very little shelling. The Germans had recently advanced and had not as yet had an opportunity to get their guns in place. It was not long, however, before they had the range and were busy banging away.

We reached the post and awaited orders. A few minutes after we saw two batteries of the famous 75's pull up in a field and begin work. And they can work some, too. Shortly after we saw a detachment of British Cavalry go into action—a wonderful sight. The men were splendid looking fellows, the horses shone in the morning light, and their long spears and swords reflected the light of the sun in a million sparkling shafts. Before long we were too busy with our "blesses" and had little time for anything but work. We worked steadily for about four days when the worst was over and things quieted down for about a month when we had two more bad days. During the first five we slept but a few minutes at a time—one night in a cellar on turnips, the next out in a courtyard with nothing but a blanket wrapped around one. We ate when we could or what we could—which wasn't a great deal some times.

There were times when one's chances of life didn't seem too good. There were times when the war came mighty close. The time for instance we learned of our first boy's death. Killed while sitting in his car ready to leave. The time, too, when we buried him—just a party of some fifty Americans (there were several men from other

sections came up) all alone among these Frenchmen, laying away one of our own boys whom we loved. But there were times when we had mighty good times through it all. Times when we would gather in some deserted house before an open fire and talk it over.

Then there was the day none of us will ever forget—the day we were called out in front of our quarters and inspected by a general while the general of our own division stood back and looked on—with just a bit of pride in his fine eyes it seemed to me. Then the general of the army corps pinned a *croix de guerre* (French war cross) on both of our French and American lieutenants and on our flag. This is the second highest grade of the war cross given and we are all mighty proud. Eleven of the boys also received citations for this work. The crosses did not come until some time later—in fact I just received mine today and am having the lieutenant send it under separate cover from Paris. Please let me know if you receive it as it means a great deal to me and I want you to be sure and get it.

We had now been at Ribecourt (just below Noyon) about six weeks when we received the order to move and go back about fifteen kilometers where we would be on reserve. Instead of going from there on to “repose,” as we expected, we went into action again, this time at Soissons, or just outside, our post being at Laveisine. From our previous position to Laveisine we encountered more dust than I ever saw in my life. In fact it was impossible to see a thing but the back of the car ahead—hardly more than ten feet. We arrived at L. about eleven o'clock and at twelve our posts were established and at four I went out to one. The lieutenant did not attack as he thought it only fair to give some of the boys a chance who had not as yet received war crosses. However, the roads were bad and as long as he deemed it advisable to have two men on every car he and I took turns riding with whatever car was ready. I started at four and rode in this manner back and forth until twelve the next day. It was quite a strain at times as the shelling was terrific. The Germans were using one of the Austrian guns, the 210 which makes a hole big enough to bury a Ford completely. People back there may think this is an exaggeration—I know I used to, but now I know it isn't. The shell before it is fired stands nearly to my waist

and is as big around as a water hydrant. The Boche had a pleasant way of sending three of these over at once and not infrequently would they break on either side and to the front or rear of our car.

I shall never smell fresh dirt but that I shall think of those terrific explosions. They would make the earth for yards around shake and quiver as though it were jelly. I have passed buildings in a small town when one of these monsters would crash through the roof and the roar would be deafening. Rocks and stones (nearly all buildings here are built of these) two feet wide would be hurled in the air like mere pebbles.

One morning I was in a small town when the shells seemed to rain into the little valley where the town was snuggled. I was in a cellar and about three blocks down the same street some more of our boys were in a similar one. A shell lit directly on top of the house over their cellar and all we could see of them was part of one boy's leg. About two hours later several of our boys and one car were captured by the Germans in the same town. It only goes to show how close one can come and still get away—what a difference there is between life and death over here.

It's funny how during a time of this kind one never fears death. At least I never do—it's only the fear of being torn to pieces by one of those big shells and left on the road somewhere to suffer. But when things are real busy and there are lots of wounded one even forgets to think of that and just goes ahead. You know you can't run fifty miles in an ambulance—it would kill all the wounded—and one usually travels very slowly and takes his chances where a shell is going to light.

We worked five days and nights on this attack and during that time I think I managed to get two hours' sleep. You may think that is not enough, but what is one to do, when there are wounded; they must never be left and they never are. Then, too, you may think it's pretty hard to keep awake. I used to think it would be but it's not so bad. The big shells and the big holes and the gas all go to keep one awake.

Now that I speak of gas perhaps you would like to know about that. That part of war goes way beyond what Sherman said. You see he never had any! I was riding one day with another boy. He

was driving and a gas shell broke near by and I gave him my mask to put on as his lay back of him. After he had adjusted his mask he handed me his. I had on a pair of gloves and, in my anxiety to get on the mask, put one glove in my mouth. That taught me a lesson. When I opened my mouth enough gas came in to make me good and sick—after that I took my gloves off with my hands.

We then went back “en repos” after five days of semiexcitement. Then was when we felt the whole thing—the nervous strain kept us up until we were back there away from it all. Then we knew that we were tired. We only were there a week and did not do a thing but clean up our cars, clean up ourselves, and rest—in capital letters—REST. We were too tired even to write letters.

Then we came up to this sector, quiet, peaceful, and wonderfully beautiful—valleys with wooded mountains on both sides, miles and miles of green trees. It’s all so different here. One almost forgets the war.

So you see, Dad, we have been through considerable. We all feel like veterans now and we are proud of all the gold stripes that show we have been here six months and prouder still of the green and red striped ribbon which shows we have done something that the French republic recognizes as real. We are proud of our section for it’s a wonder, and we are proud of our lieutenant, who has made it such. Of course we are sad at times when we think of the boys we have lost—killed or taken prisoners—but after all we must expect that. It’s part of the game.

Give my best to all my friends—tell them to forgive me if I don’t write. I think of them often. Please, Dad, write me a nice long letter. I miss yours very much and I haven’t heard in a long time. How does the car run, and is your garden as good as ever? If it is, I certainly hate the Boche more than ever.

A FOURTH OF JULY AT THE FRONT ²

The great and glorious Fourth has come and gone. The weather here was perfect. It was a gala day everywhere. It would have done your heart good to see the crowds of Englishmen, Frenchmen, Scotchmen, Irishmen, Australians, and Canadians mixing with our

² Letter of Lieutenant Harry Kessenich to his parents, July 7, 1918, in *Madison Democrat* of August 6.

lads in a perfect realization of what July fourth meant to America and what it means to the world today. It meant liberty for us. It means liberty for the world—the liberty, truth, and justice that the allies believe in and which they will attain because of their wonderful unity of purpose and action and because the grace of God is with them. We cannot lose. We will win!

And now, folks, let me tell you about the day's program in our own little camp. We had an afternoon of sports, track and field events and boxing contests that would be hard to beat anywhere. Two hundred English Tommies and their officers were with us. It was an afternoon of fun. The lads surely enjoyed the contests as it was a fight for supremacy between platoons. And they gave their guests some good, wholesome ideas of the strength, speed, and alertness of real Americans. After the meet I overheard some Tommies discussing the events.

One of them said, "When those lads get into a fight, they'll bother Jerry a bit."

Coming from an Englishman those few words meant a lot. An American expressing the same feeling would undoubtedly have said: "When those lads get into a fight each of 'em 'll pound the blocks off forty-seven Boches."

As I have often written to you, the English officers at this place have made it their duty to do for us everything in their power to make our camp better and more pleasant. We have appreciated their kindness and resolved to do something for them on the Fourth. So I asked them for the privilege of their officers' mess that evening that we might give them a regular dinner. We have not as yet the facilities in our camp for staging such affairs. But they agreed with pleasure and with the aid of their English cooks and their school adjutant we went to work and staged a dinner, which for its completeness, its good fellowship, and its patriotism was the peer of any I have ever attended, and I would wager it had no equal in France.

The circumstances made it such. There we were, nine Americans and ten British officers, dining together in an English school, celebrating the day that gave America liberty from Britain, celebrating the fact that America and Britain are now allies in a common

cause and all of us on foreign soil! It was a cosmopolitan gathering. We ranged in rank from second lieutenant to major. The major commandant of the British school is a famous athlete from Cambridge university. One of his instructor captains is from Oxford university, where he played on the football, cricket, and track teams. Other English officers attended the University of London-West. Among the Americans the following universities were represented: Yale, Vanderbilt, Tennessee, Washington and Lee, Richmond college, Michigan, Georgetown, Marquette, and Wisconsin. Could you ask for a representation more varied among such a number of men?

The table was gorgeous in American and British flags, red, white, and blue flowers. I had the honor of being at the head of the table, with the major commandant on my right. At the other end of the table, acting as vice-master, was a Scotch captain. At the conclusion of the "oats" I said a very few words apropos the occasion and proposed a toast to His Majesty, the King of England. The major responded by lauding America's efforts, reading the official communique of the day, wherein it told of America's million soldiers in France, and of the launching that day of a hundred American ships. He praised President Wilson as the greatest statesman of the day and then asked a toast to "His Excellency, Woodrow Wilson, president of the United States." Toasts were then proposed to the English navy, which has performed one of the miracles of the war in keeping the English channel open, and in helping in the transport of America's army across the seas with the loss of less than three hundred lives. Then came words of praise for General Pershing, General Haig, and General Foch, and finally a toast to the English staff, who prepared the dinner.

The bombardier, a quick-witted Irishman, McCarthy by name, said that while in his opinion the dinner with its fixings was the best they had ever staged at the school, yet it was the easiest to prepare, "because your toastmaster came to me with a fistful of money, told me that the sky was the limit, not to bother about expenses, and that if I needed more money to come to him." It was the truth. We spared no effort to make the affair one which the guests would

never forget, one which the hosts would always cherish as one of the most glorious "Fourth" celebrations ever.

When we went into the anteroom we sang "America" and "God Save the King," gave about a dozen yells for each university represented and a lot that were not represented. Then the party broke up. My throat is still sore.

Well, that is the way we spent the Fourth. I have tried to give you my idea of the day "over here." We all hope and pray that the next anniversary of the day will find us back "over there," but not unless we have routed kaiserism, put autocracy to flight, and helped to make the world safe for democracy.

A VETERINARY'S OBSERVATIONS ³

This morning, while pondering over the events of the past, Hampton and I conceived the notion to write you a letter to remind you that everyone of our old acquaintances in the veterinary profession at home has not been forgotten. In our travels over the shell-ridden fields, as well as through the beautiful cultivated landscapes of France, we have often talked about you, the wife and kids and the whole civil population of St. Cloud, who always treated us so well when we paid them a visit. I have often wondered how you are getting along with your practice and other enterprises.

I suppose you have known that Hampton and I have been in France for some time. He arrived last August and I in December. It was strange that in my first assignment I should have immediately found him there as one of my underofficers. We with five others started the first American veterinary hospital in France and after four months turned it over to a regular veterinary unit that arrived from the States. On being assigned to this office I brought Hampton along to serve as my bodyguard, chief assistant, and principal inspiration.

I am not at liberty to state in a letter what our duties are or to say anything about our activities, but you may rest assured we are not the smallest peas in the pod. Our work takes us everywhere and already we have had all the experiences, close shaves, and excit-

³ Letter of Major L. A. Merillat, printed in *Fond du Lac Reporter*, August 9, 1918.

ing moments any bloodthirsty human being could desire. When it is all over I am going to write a book for fireside entertainment for the coming generation, that is, if the good graces of our ambitious would-be Ruler of the universe, and God, will be so kind as to spare me. Up to date this creature of festering royalty has done big things with his armanent. He has terrorized small nations, tortured those unfortunate enough to have fallen into his hands, defiled families, exhibited prisoners in cages to his admiring people like wild animals, chained his own soldiers to their guns so they could not retreat, spent millions spreading disastrous propaganda wherever he could—but the one thing he has utterly failed to do is to scare anybody.

I am telling you only what I have myself personally observed or obtained first hand, and I tell you, Schrage, it will some day all react so hard on those responsible that no one who should by right be pleased with punishment will be savage enough to enjoy it. The day is at hand when they are going to get licked, just like all bullies always finally get it in the neck or solar plexus, and it is beginning to look as if it will be the Americans who will deliver the blow.

You know, in Germany, the Americans are treated like savages. They say to their people that we are not intelligent enough to be treated like the soldiers of other nations and so the poor fools, deluded by the rulers they have been forced to venerate, are compelled to assume an attitude of contempt toward us. But already they have found out more times than the papers have stated it, that they are fighting real men now, and not Russians. The whole truth is, Schrage, the American soldiers have it all over them. They don't give a damn for their gas, their tricks, their big guns, nor the discipline they call bravery; they just go in and get them, and a wholesome respect for the Yankee gameness is already having a telling effect.

As the German soldier himself is learning this and is comparing the individual American character with the lies he was told about him, he is actually turning on his own country. "You can't fool all the people all the time," as the old saying goes. There will soon be a million of us here, and the Germans know it, but still, yesterday, in a clipping from one of their papers they announced that

there were only a few Americans here and that most of them were Sioux Indians. Can you beat it? Can you imagine a people could be kept in such abject ignorance and under such abject subjugation?

I often wonder how Wisconsin is behaving during these days and how the large German population actually feels about this war. Myself, I have always been the champion of the loyalty of the German-Americans, knowing so many of them at home and here who are nothing but regular fellows and as anxious to shake off this monster as anyone else. I take, for example, my own wife, born of German parents, who not only gave her husband and only child to the army, but quit a comfortable home in Chicago to live on a lonesome farm, in order that it might be made more productive, while anxiously waiting for news about the welfare of all she has in the world to live for. And I know there are other Germans like her. I would hate to think otherwise. The real features of this war are not yet understood by many. Its bigness, and the bigness of the daily events mask the real issues. Soon the full truth will be known to all and the foolhardiness of a man who in the guise of trying to save his people wants to rule everyone will be apparent.

A HARVARD MAN IN BATTLE⁴

Well, here I am again, Mother, still above the ground and feeling fine, but a little nervous from past experiences.

I received the *Herald* today. Guess where? Well, on the field of battle at the Marne. I will try and tell you a little of what I have gone through of late. The *Herald* and also the *Independent* have the distinction of being read by both Casey and myself on the Marne in France. It came about like this: They called for volunteers and you know we never want to miss anything, so I volunteered, along with twenty-three others, Casey among them. Well, we were loaded on one of these French trains; rode for about fourteen hours; got out; piled into auto trucks and rode for seven hours more; and at last dropped in at the ringside. And believe me, it was some fight. I saw more men killed in ten minutes than could march up Main Street abreast in half an hour. Well, we went into action after twenty-one hours on the road and close on eighty-six hours' hitch

⁴Letter of Thomas F. King to his parents, June 12, 1918, printed in *Baraboo Republic* for August 10.

without a bite, only hot cocoa and bread. But no one kicked, as we fed up on Germans.

It is funny, Mother, the things that come into a fellow's mind. You see the Germans come into action, locked arms, without a gun or grenade. The idea is to get the storm troops as close to us as they can without losing them. Well, when I saw them coming (I was in a hole behind a machine gun and sure was working fine) the song, "All Dressed Up and No Place to Go" came into my mind. They all had new uniforms on and new boots, but what an insipid lot! Their faces are devoid of expression of any kind, just like the pigs that they are. Well, we fed them their "iron rations" and they fell back. Eight times they came against that American position only to be driven back by machine gun, rifle, and artillery fire. That slope was so slippery with blood that they could not walk up it, so they fell back and shelled it to plow it up. Then we fell back and strengthened our positions. They came again and this time we broke up their ranks. A German will fight as long as he has all the odds in his favor, but even them up and he quits like a yellow dog. Well, it kept up until I am sure you all, way back there, could hear the noise. The concussion of the big ones is sure awful and a nose-bleed is the only relief. My nose bled like a regular spring, but I felt fine all the way through.

We got in one bad hole once and at once were surrounded by Saxons, men about six feet tall and as big as a mountain, but another company charged and out we came. I know of one of those big dogs who sure won't vote in Berlin this fall. I now have his helmet, for he has no further use for it. He came at us like a fire horse. My gun was empty and the bayonet was broken, but I had one "noisy apple" (hand grenade) so I gave it to him and down he came. Never did I think I could kill a man, but I can, a German above all things. As long as they are ahead of the game in numbers they are fine, but when they have to fight, then is when they expect mercy, but they do not get it. (Orders are orders over here.) We went in about fifty strong on our position; there were eight of us left, the majority wounded; but some of them will never go home. It hurts after one gets back and at rest, when he sees it all and wonders how he came through. Casey and I met at the mail

wagon. We were looking for each other and you may be sure we were glad to see each other. Got our mail and are now back of the lines getting rest. We were on our feet for eighty-six hours and now I am answering Frances' letters and one to you.

I got the paper, saw in it a letter from Bill Gendrick. He does not like the South. Wait until he is over here in hell for a year and Hogan's Alley will look good to him back there. All of those who are coming over might just as well make up their minds that this is not a tour, but real, hot stuff. Now, I see you are having a Red Cross drive back there. Anything anyone can do for the Red Cross they ought to do and smile, for how little you all know about the wonderful work they do over here. And those Red Cross nurses! Why, mother, they work for days at a time without a rest, for no one but us, and there isn't a soldier in France who would not lay down his life for those good Red Cross women.

We will soon again go back to our original positions and wait for the original eight and some more of the home boys to step up and show them just how good "Old Illinois" is. I came out in good shape, with only a bit of shell in one foot, and I had my foot dressed by a nurse from Janesville, Wisconsin. She asked me if I was from Chicago. I said, "A little way from there." So I told her where, and she told me where she came from. And, gee, it did sound good to hear her say that. She knew some fellows I knew up there so I got an extra good dressing on my foot. Pretty soft for me, huh?

Now listen, Mother, do not worry for I am O. K. and you know some men were made to hang, so I figure I am one of those.

The Germans are strong with their gas and of course a gas mask is a hard thing to fight in. It smells like the middle of a hospital and after one has it on for five or six hours he is glad to get it off.

We took prisoners and I stood near one and he said: "Got a cig. Billy?" Well, you know, Mother, a fellow would give the Devil a smoke over here if he met him. This one spoke good English. He was in Chicago when the Hotel Kaiserhof changed its name to the Atlantic, and that was after the United States declared war on Germany. So you see he made good time home to help out his Kaiser, didn't he? But I told him he couldn't get into the States

again with a shoehorn and he said "I guess not." He says Germany is in a bad fix and that they do not like to face the Americans for they sure can fight.

Well, Mother, you may give this to the paper, if you wish. Tell all the people back there never to forget the Red Cross and cut out the peace talk. No one over here wants peace—not until every Hun is made a "bum" and it will not take very long, for he is whipped in all stages of the game.

A DAY'S WORK IN THE Y. M. C. A.⁵

This week has been uneventful, aside from the ordinary run of fighting on our front—night trench raids, gas attacks, bombing raids over our towns—there is nothing to report. You read of those things now morning, noon, and night, so I won't bother you much with them. One reason is that the censor will not let me bother him about them. We cannot tell you the interesting things of our life over here; we must ever seek the flat, commonplace affairs to send off to you.

Three days ago a German airplane was brought down beside our town. It was a two-seater that had been hovering far overhead for some time; the Boche do this a great deal in this sector. The antiaircraft guns were working on this fellow as usual, and seemed to get no nearer his wings than usual; he sailed serenely here and there, taking our pictures, or preparing to drop bombs, or whatever it was he was after. Our shells, like so much pop corn, were breaking all around him—really a beautiful sight against the blue dome. We have watched these things so much lately our necks ache and we quit. Suddenly this fellow was seen in a long dive; then he began to spiral and then to tumble more or less, and we began to realize he had been knocked a little groggy; soon he took a long straight dive and disappeared behind the trees, and we knew another aviator had closed his last throttle.

The next day I was told from those who went out to the place, about four miles away, that there was nothing left of man or machine, but little broken bits. It was a German lieutenant and his mechanic aboard the craft. They said the lieutenant was dressed

⁵ Letter of Daniel Wells, printed in *Marinette Star*, August 14, 1918.

in the best military style, "all spruced up, as if he was goin' somewhere" as one of the men told me. They gathered up the broken bits and gave them a military burial. They made two graves at the edge of the near-by wood and the chaplain fashioned a cross and left it there.

There are hundreds of Jews in this division we have with us now, New York Jews, fresh from the counters and offices of the city, many of them; and we are watching them with considerable curiosity, at least in the trenches, to see what they will do when the big guns are breaking overhead, and the "typewriters," the machine guns, are chattering out in front of them. I wish I could write you more on this subject.

We had a joint celebration on the Fourth with the French, and they certainly were keen to share the day with us. They joined in our games with us and helped decorate our graves. The French are certainly a hospitable, likeable people; I have been here nearly fourteen months now and I think more and more of them every day. They are a nation that's game all the way. You can never extinguish the French nation; no matter how many times they are down, they come back.

You might want to know how we put in an average day in our work over here. I get up between 6:30 and 7 in my room over the school. I go up to our Y mess on the hill above me. There I sit down with our divisional director, our treasurer, the athletic director, the religious manager, the entertainment man, and several others. After someone else asks grace, we pitch into a breakfast of bacon, coffee, French war bread and butter. I say butter, because I want to give it special and honorable mention. After breakfast I dodge around on my duties and errands. Maybe several new Y men, or women, have come in the night before and need attention or instructions before they take the field or go into one of our local canteens. Many of them don't know a thing about the town, the sector, or France, and in everything they do they need to be steered. They almost have to be led across the street.

If it is not new members there is probably some lease for one of our canteens or places of amusement that needs attention and I must go and jabber French to some native to settle an account or

pay some claims. Then there may be something that takes me to division headquarters, or French military headquarters, about some of our automobile truck licenses or some French Civilian workers in our warehouse or some other place. In the afternoon, I will probably have a party of seven or eight to take up to get their gas drill, so they will be prepared for gas attacks in the trenches, or in some of the near-by towns. After the gas party, there is probably something that takes me to one of our towns and stations distant perhaps about five or six miles; this trip I take on Y car, Ford, or truck, or on my bicycle—I always prefer the bicycle. Sometimes I am gone all day out in the field, going around to our stations on one thing or another that may seem trivial, but is necessary and often difficult, since we must often do a thing ourselves to get it done at all. When I am gone all day I eat wherever mealtime overtakes me. I like these meals best as they are with the troops.

In the evening, I am back at our Y mess, because unfortunately I have to run that; after dinner, if I have been in town all day, I invariably take a walk, or my bike, through the enchanted fields and woods and forests of this part of France. I have never seen any rural scenery to compare with it and every way we go, we have the hard, smooth roads to roll over. I often leave my wheel beside the road and wade through the high grass, the blue flowers, and wild poppies toward the setting sun, watching it finally drop “back there,” where are all those I know and love, for after all, you know, this is France and back there, it’s home.

When I get back to my billet from the country, I take my French lesson, at 9 o’clock, from one of the schoolmasters here. This lesson now consists in conversation, with him correcting me as I go along. I am out of the grammar stage of the language now; that is, at least I know more rules than I can apply and I must needs spend all my time in practice, with someone who can trip me up in about every sentence and show me my mistakes, if he has time to go over all of them. Interpreting is about half my work.

As I write you this letter, I can look out of the high French window in my room and with its high angle of fire toward the sky, I can see another Boche plane skating around up there in the blue, looking for what’s coming to him, and with our popcorn breaking

all around him, as he trundles his little wheelbarrow through the skies this way and that looking for a place to drop one of his eggs, or trying to get low enough to take a pretty picture of us. They **must like us in a way**; they are everlastingly trying to take our pictures. Once in a while we take their number.

Of late these Boche planes have taken to dropping little toy balloons down on us, filled with propaganda of the usual kind. That was what this one we knocked down was doing; he had just dropped some sheets saying they were going to bombard our town and warning the civilians to get out. Before he had made the tour back to his own lines he himself had been bombarded and the nose of his motor was buried about four feet in French soil. This fellow's motor was hit at high altitude and he began to drop; then he was seen to get his motor going wide open later about four or five hundred feet from the ground, but he was not able to hold his wagon on her course. With his motor going wide open he still made straight for the ground; this made his fall all the harder, as it brought the ground toward him just that much faster. Then the poor devil scattered himself in a French wheat field and there was not much left of him to pick up but his calling cards, which were mailed to his home through the Red Cross in Switzerland.

I must now get ready for the next bombardment—of shells? No—of flies, at our evening mess.

MADISON ARTILLERYMAN GETS MUSTARD GAS⁶

My long-hoped-for baptism of fire—and gas—was pulled off in due form, and here I am in a mighty pleasant and restful base hospital recovering from that formerly palatable condiment, mustard. But it was sent over in gas form and I cannot say that it was relished.

We arrived at our sector on Friday, the twelfth, and on Sunday night took part in our first scrimmage. Also sustained our first casualties. Only about fifty of the battery were engaged and I hadn't succeeded in getting to the front, it being about Monday noon before I arrived. But from accounts current the Boche opened up on our positions about midnight and "strafed" 'em with shrapnel,

⁶Letter of Morris Davis to his sister, July 26, 1918, printed in *Madison State Journal* of August 24.

high explosives, and gas for eight hours. They succeeded in getting within a hundred yards of our positions but morning found them back in their own little dugouts—such as were left. They were so close, however, that we prepared to blow up the guns, which is accomplished, you remember, by disconnecting the barrel from the recoil spring and firing a last shot. The recoil throws the barrel back against the trail and is said to smash things most satisfactorily. I hope we never have to do it though.

First physical offensive against the Hun consisted of ramming home a 100-pound high explosive shell and placing a powder charge behind it. This happened at 8:35 P. M., July 15, and from then until I was placed "hors de non-combat" Saturday morning I did things to upwards of a thousand similar shells. Reports were that they played hop with four or five divisions of Hunmen and we know of two pontoon bridges and an observation tower that they spoiled. It is an indescribable feeling when someone over by the battery command dug-out pops up and says, "Number four gun did that."

For fear that you are worrying about my gassing, I'll tell you about it right here. Friday night the Hun gave us—free—gratis—for nothing—about five gas shells a minute for several hours. The shells were about four-inch ones. By Saturday morning they were all over the landscape. Instead of a heavy charge of explosive, the nose of a gas shell contains only a light charge of powder—just sufficient to shatter the casing and release the gas, though there is some fragmentation.

Four of these shells dropped within a few feet of me and by seven o'clock Saturday morning I was violently sick. I worked along awhile, thinking it would pass, but finally had to lie down in a machine gun dug-out. Woke in about an hour, practically blind. It was four days before I saw anything. That, however, has about passed now. The gas also burned the flesh in several places, though not severely.

The trip to the base was made in one of the finest hospital trains that I ever saw—American. It was crowded, too, though serious wounds were not plentiful. The wounded are, for the most part, as matter-of-fact and unheroic as a bunch of measles patients. Their typical expression is, "Well, we sure did give 'em hell."

I think the American soldier will make a good veteran.

Being under fire is quite an experience, but I have been thrilled lots more at a movie and scared worse. About the only noticeable sensation is nervousness, which may amount to a chill in the early morning after being suddenly awakened, or which may be only a slight quickening of motions. Ordinarily with an "action" gun crew—3 men, drill strength is 6—two shots per minute is about the limit, but when Fritz's shells are creeping closer with each burst, it is no trouble at all to send three. Then there is the feeling of oppression, almost fear, on waking suddenly when very tired. When Fritz is active we average about one hour's sleep to nine or ten of hard work. Often when we are all set for three hours of sleep we are called out on a rush within fifteen minutes. One gets so he can sleep anywhere; I dozed off once with a fused shell in my hands, waiting for the word to load. And I slept five hours at a stretch on a slope so steep that it took a deep toe-hold to stick on at all. One can sleep in mud through a driving rain—and never take cold. Oh, it's a beautiful life in many ways. You enjoy sleep and food more than the most fondly imagined joys of soft living, and the bare thought of—oh, strawberry shortcake and cream, to mention one of a hundred—is a joy keener than ever described by novelist or poet. What a value I am setting on plain little everyday things these days.

It does not seem possible that I was there only five days. I remember enough of incident and sensation to fill an ordinary month. With all the dirt and work and vermin, with all the lack of sleep and all that, I enjoyed it more than all of my whole army life. I could not help but turn down two offers of relief—only about fifty being on the firing line at a time, the rest of the battery relieving them in turn. As a result about a third of the first contingent is still at the guns now, while I am lounging back here in a hospital. And the worst of it is that there have been big doings in our sector, and our lines have advanced. But there will be more big events this fall, I confidently believe.

The woods and ridges around our position just teemed with guns of all sizes—quite a number of thousands of them in a ten-mile sector. And on two pitch-black nights they laid down a barrage! The noise was wonderful, and the muzzle flashes made things as

day at times. Fritz was getting every kind of shell we had—gas, high explosive, shrapnel. It seemed to me that our artillery landed about a thousand shells to Fritz's one all week, but perhaps he was doing more than surface appearances indicated.

Another everpresent feature is the 'planes—flocks and squadrons of 'em. They fly in every conceivable formation, and many things are less beautiful than a squadron in the full light of a rising or setting sun. Air battles, too, like all newspaper reports, are "too numerous to mention." The ground is infested with antiaircraft machine guns and "Archies." Fifteen or twenty black and white shrapnel bursts, together with the staccato rattle of several machine guns, give one a faint idea of the beautifully varied life of an airman.

Mind and body are almost entirely detached from each other under active conditions at the front. The effort to remember the day of the week or the date is about the extreme limit of mental activity. I have a vague impression that I have just passed my twenty-third birthday and there will be letters from home—most readable and satisfying to this "soldat americaine en France." But there is no paper nor envelopes any place to mail letters up there. My letters may therefore be irregular if the Huns continue going backwards. But don't worry.

HORRORS OF WAR AT CHATEAU THIERRY¹

The villages that have recently come into our hands sure do show great evidence of heavy and savage fighting. We came into Chateau Thierry only a few days after Mr. Boche had been driven out. From my window here, over a stable, you can look out over a hill that was the scene of a bloody battle. The Huns had machine gun pits and trenches. There is almost a hundred of dead Boche lying about. Some places in the trench they are three deep.

You bet our boys, brave men, every one, marched straight into the rain of machine gun bullets, and killed the Germans where they stood. On the edge of our trench are buried a corporal and his men. Their rifles with bayonets still fixed lay where they were dropped in the murderous hand to hand struggle. Their blood is spilled

¹Letter of William McDonald of Janesville, August 7, 1918, printed in *Janesville Gazette* of September 20.

all over the ground. But for that blood the Germans paid dearly. I walked up to the trench and peered in. There were Germans three deep with their heads smashed in. No quarter was asked, and none was given.

All over the hill can be seen the deadly effects of our boys' fire, and bayonet work. I went into a house with some war correspondents of the *New York Herald*. An aged couple came in to see us. They had been once German prisoners, but made good their escape when the drive was at its height. They returned only to find a shell of what was once their home. They were sad after gazing at the ruined walls and furniture, but they said they would remain and get along somehow.

There were many rifles and abandoned machine guns and German equipment strewn about the yard. Everything showed signs of a fierce encounter. A few feet away lay piles of German dead, one an officer. The stench that comes from these battle fields is awful. Flies are so thick that you almost breathe them. They get into your food, your eyes, and your ears. The walls at night are simply black with them. It has been raining for three or four days. The roads are deep with mud. By that I mean honest to goodness MUD in capital letters. It turned pretty cold, and tonight I am going to turn in, in heavy marching order. Can you imagine those boys, the poor fellows on the line? No shelter and many have lost their equipment. Digging themselves in, and living in trenches filled with water, and some without blankets.

The devastation left in the wake of Mr. Boche is fierce—beautiful homes where once lived happy and contented people. Most of the homes were furnished wonderfully, and are now almost total ruins. At one place we saw some grand chateaux that it was more than a crime to despoil.

Many of my old comrades have been checked off, but the reports do not come in very fast in a drive like this, so I am waiting patiently for some word from my company. I saw many of my old friends just before they started for the front. They were glad to see me, and I was glad to see them. The old company's privates were all sent away soon after they came across. But I saw Lieutenants

Pelton and Rau, also a few of the noncoms from Janesville and Edgerton. They all made a name for themselves.

My pal and I walked up to where a battery was putting over a heavy barrage on the woods just ahead, where the Germans were located. We came through a wheat field, and were chased by two boche machines—(planes). We evaded them by ducking into some woods. We emerged on the opposite side. We saw troops marching up the road towards the front. They called to me, and I ran over and discovered it was Co. M. I shook hands with all that I knew, and said good-bye. Then fell in with them for a little way.

The head of the column entered a little village. Just then the Germans started to shell it. The first shell was a terrific explosion. You could hear the cries of the wounded men. An ambulance that passed us only a few moments before came slowly back filled, many of them hanging on the fenders. One fellow, now a corporal, who used to be in my squad waved and called out a "Hello Mac." With his arm almost torn off, he smiled. How do the Huns expect to lick men like these? Then came the alarm of "gas." Quickly we donned our gas masks. The line started forward again, and we started back to division headquarters. We walked until we saw some Frenchmen on a wagon. They did not have their gas masks on, so we removed ours, and looked at each other, and as usual laughed.

One lieutenant, a great friend of mine, and a member of the original advance party, has been killed. He was shot through the leg. He was so mad he grabbed up a rifle and bayonet, and charged a machine gun emplacement. He was cut almost in two by the deadly bullets, and so ended his short army career. Two other lieutenants, very good friends of mine, have made the supreme sacrifice. But in turn the Germans have only that much more to settle for. It seems too bad, that good men have to come this long way, to let some damn squarehead sauerkrauteater shoot them down. But such are the tolls of war, and their death could not be more honorable.

THE STORY OF A RED CROSS NURSE⁸

They tell me the ban is off most things in writing home, so I'll be freer now to tell of our trip over, and what we've been doing so

⁸ Letter of Jane Taylor, November 28, 1918, printed in *Fond du Lac Reporter* of December 20.

far. Very tame compared to all that has been going on, still it may be of interest to the home people in general.

Our unit of one hundred nurses left New York October 26 and 27. We left the city in groups of from 25 down to 5. Went to different piers, and were taken to different ships that were to start out in convoy for some unknown overseas port. Left the harbor in the evening of October 27.

In a way it was a very friendly trip all the way, for there were about sixteen ships always near to each other and signaling constantly. We were given life belts, but on our ship we were not compelled to wear them all the time, as I found later was the order on other ships in the convoy. But we had to have them beside us wherever we were, night or day. We had drill call every day, and had to hurry to our place beside the lifeboat that was to be ours in case of submarine danger. At night ships were kept dark. No cigars or even radium wrist watches were allowed on deck.

My heart kept going down to the troop decks where the enlisted men were, but a wiser head than mine decreed that we were to be down there only as needed to care for the sick. But oh you people at home, deal lovingly with the boys as they return, they need it so, even if they do not do exactly what is considered right by the set lines made for ordinary people. Remember, "Enlisted men in barracks don't grow into plaster saints."

Our convoy seemed to wander all over the Atlantic in our trip across—some days in the gulf stream and then out again—but at last we landed without mishap in Liverpool. An escort of ships came out to meet us the last day, and took us in with great care. There our unit of nurses was united for a brief time, and we were all put on a train at once and sent to Southampton. Traveled all night, and of course no sleepers. After a hurried breakfast at the station hotel in Southampton the unit was again divided for safety in the cross-channel trip. The chief nurse took half, and I was given half, and we never got all together again until we reached here. We were put on a hospital ship in the morning and stayed around near port until night; then we started out and were landed at Havre, France, in the morning.

Were met by a transportation officer and taken to a hotel, where arrangements had been made for us to stay. That was Sunday, November 10. The next morning the whole town began to wake up, and word went around "Feenished la guerre." Everybody kept saying it to us, and we began to realize that it really must be over. By afternoon the quiet streets began to resemble the place in front of a circus tent entrance. Couldn't get through the crowds, and then groups began marching and singing. They called to have the Americans march, so the Y. M. C. A. people collected as many as they could to begin with, and before long the line grew to great proportions. The band went first, then the nurses under our own flag that we'd never had occasion to use before, then every American, mostly soldiers, who saw what was going on, joined in. I'd never marched in the streets before in my life, and I'll never forget that day. The whole street full marched right with us. Women reached out their hands to us, and men cheered, and oh, so many tears through the crowd. I threw kisses from my hand and they were returned to me by the thousands.

But darkness came on and the marching stopped, and we were hurried onto a train to take us to our destination, then unknown to all the nurses except myself. All I could tell them was that we'd have to change trains in the morning and go another twelve hours.

A cold night on the train, but this time we had bread and jam with us, and that helped some. In the morning we arrived, where? In Paris! It was early in the morning and Paris had just gone to bed after its first night's celebration. We were too late to make connections with our other train out of Paris, and next train not until next morning. There was no officer to meet us or give us help. We went to a hotel the army people patronize a great deal, but no room for us. "For one person maybe, yes, but for nearly fifty—Oh, la! la! No." Paris was full up with people. All France had come in. I spent until late afternoon telephoning this office and that, waiting about a half hour each time for telephone connection, and at home, to think I've grown impatient if central kept me waiting a whole minute! Then I tried to get out by afternoon. I tried to get out and hunt up the officers, so as to get more satisfaction, but found I couldn't get through the streets, and all traffic was stopped.

Then I called all the girls together and said, "Folks, it's come to a case of abandon ship." Go out in twos and threes through the near-by streets and see if you can find rooms for yourselves. Only report here early enough to get to the train tomorrow morning in case I can get accommodations. Soon after they had scattered a tired little sergeant from the transportation office found me at the hotel, and explained how upset everything was, but promised he'd do all he could to have space for us on the next morning train. One of the nurses who found a room came back for me, and later in the evening I went back to see if any nurses were unable to find places for the night, but all had been fitted in somewhere. Early the next morning we found two coaches reserved for us, and started away before Paris had really gotten to bed.

Impossible to get coffee so early, so we had to be contented with dry bread until nearly noon. I learned that we were to stop over half an hour at a station. About an hour ahead I got a telegram sent, asking that the station restaurant have at least coffee for us when we arrived there. The station people in their distress at having such a hurry-up message, went over to some American soldiers with it. In no time they had arranged a long table for us, and had coffee, bread, rice, meat, and cheese for us, and had even arranged how much we were to pay for it, so we wouldn't be cheated. (In time of need turn to the soldiers.) When we were ready to go I couldn't find them anywhere to thank them for their trouble, but thanks they surely got if they only knew it.

At 7 P. M. we reached Mars-sur-Allies, and a tired lot of people we were. Great army carryalls met us, after we had telephoned out, and brought us out here to camp. And so well had I trained the girls by that time to keep their eyes on their own suitcases, that way out here in the country, where there was no danger of having them picked up, every girl grabbed her own heavy suitcase, and seemed loath to let the soldiers put them in the truck out of their sight.

We've rested not at all since we came. A few are sent each day to different camps all over France. Tomorrow I'm to go with nine others to a place called Angers, northwest from here, near Tours. But the prospects are none of us are going to be kept over here very

long. Trainloads of patients are leaving every day now. The boys are tremblingly glad to go. I watched them load a train this morning, and they were still getting ready to go this afternoon. Oh, people, be good to them when they get there. One look of home will bring many of them back to health, who are going down hill here. I'm seeing all I can bear to see it seems, and the cold rooms and dampness are giving coughs and colds to many of us.

I'm expressing no preferences for any place to work, or kind of work. Wherever I'm sent I'll go gladly, but I'm thinking that if they took me now to accompany sick soldiers home, I'd go most gladly. To die gloriously in wartime is one thing, but to shiver and shake and finally die of pneumonia when war is done is quite another. Home looks good to me.